

Message Text

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S/S-O - MR. THYDEN

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TO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652:XGDS-1

TAGS:NU

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH NICARAGUAN FOREIGN MINISTER
QUINTANA

SUMMARY: NICARAGUAN FOREIGN MINISTER QUINTANA CALLED AT
HIS REQUEST ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY VAKY SEPTEMBER 8. IN
LONG CONVERSATION, VAKY EXPRESSED OPINION THAT SITUATION
HAD REACHED POINT IN WHICH SOME OUTSIDE CATALYST APPEARED
NECESSARY TO HELP ALL THE PARTIES REESTABLISH NATIONAL CON-
SENSUS AND POLITICAL PEACE. THEREFORE CENTRAL AMERICAN
INITIATIVE APPEARED WELCOME STEP. QUINTANA SAID HE LIKED

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IDEA OF WHAT HE PREFERRED TO CALL "NEGOTIATION," THOUGH HE
FELT THIS SHOULD BE DONE BY SOME THIRD PARTY NICARAGUAN OF
DISTINGUISHED STATURE. HE SAID HE WOULD FLY BACK TO MANAGUA
TO DISCUSS THIS WITH SOMOZA. HE SUGGESTED OAS SEPTEMBER 12
MEETING BE POSTPONED, AND SAID NICARAGUA WOULD LIKE TO HAVE
EARLY VISIT BY INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. END
SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER QUINTANA AND AMBASSADOR SEVILLA-SACASA TODAY CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY VAKY. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHELTON AND ACTING NICARAGUA DESK OFFICER KNIGHT ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING.

2. QUINTANA SAID PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAD INSTRUCTED HIM TO SEEK A MEETING WITH VAKY TO OBTAIN HIS VIEWS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NICARAGUA AND THE OAS. VAKY SAID HE WANTED TO BE FRANK; IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE WAS A WIDE RANGE OF OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME FROM RESPECTABLE AND MODERATE ELEMENTS. IT WAS NOT FAIR TO PICTURE THE SITUATION AS SIMPLY ONE OF THE REGIME VERSUS COMMUNISTS/CASTROISTS. THE CURRENT POLITICAL TENSIONS WERE GETTING WORSE AND THE SITUATION WAS POLARIZING. REPRESSIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE MODERATE OPPOSITION, AS FOR EXAMPLE THE STRIKE LEADERS, PROMISED ONLY TO DESTROY THE RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION AND LEGITIMIZE THE VIOLENT EXTREME.

3. UNFORTUNATELY, VAKY SAID, THE SITUATION HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE NO AGREEMENT OR MEETING OF THE MINDS COULD APPARENTLY GENERATE SPONTANEOUSLY. IT APPEARED TO HIM PERSONALLY THAT WITH ALL SIDES HARDENING, WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS AN OUTSIDE CATALYST TO HELP REACH A CONSENSUS AND AGREEMENT ON A POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJOR ACTORS. WHEN PRESIDENT CARAZO INFORMED US OF
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HIS IDEA FOR A CENTRAL AMERICAN MEDIATION WE TOLD HIM, THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS, AND PRESIDENT SOMOZA THAT WE WELCOMED THAT INITIATIVE AND WOULD SUPPORT IT. HE URGED THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO CONSIDER IT SERIOUSLY.

4. QUINTANA SAID HE LIKED THE IDEA OF SUCH A PROCESS AND ACCEPTED THE URGENT NEED FOR IT. BUT HE EMPHASIZED THE DIFFICULTIES OF EFFECTING IT BECAUSE OF THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE OPPOSITION, AND THE LONG HISTORY OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION. VAKY SAID WE RECOGNIZED THE SENSITIVITY SURROUNDING THE REALITY OR THE PERCEPTION OF INTERVENTION, BUT PROFFERED THE ANALOGY OF A QUARRELING HUSBAND AND WIFE WHO TURN TO A MARRIAGE COUNSELOR TO PRESERVE THE UNION. SO SHOULD NICARAGUA CONSIDER TURNING TO SOME DISTINGUISHED PERSON, GROUP OR INSTITUTION ACCEPTABLE TO ALL SIDES WHO COULD TALK TO ALL SIDES, DEFINE THE ISSUES AND PROMOTE AGREEMENT. VAKY SAID THAT IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT SUCH A PROCESS WOULD BE DIFFICULT; IT WOULD BE A NEGOTIATION; WE DID NOT PRESUME TO DEFINE A PARTICULAR FORMULA, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT WOULD REQUIRE "HEROIC" DECISIONS AND SACRIFICE. QUINTANA ASKED WITH WHOM SUCH A PROCESS WOULD BE CARRIED OUT; IT COULD NOT BE WITH THE COMMUNISTS.

VAKY REPLIED THAT IT SHOULD INCLUDE AS BROAD A SECTOR OF THE OPPOSITION AS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING EVEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWELVE IF THIS WAS TO HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY.

5. QUINTANA WELCOMED THIS ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTIONS, OUT-
5. QUINTANA WELCOMED THIS ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTIONS, OUT-
LINED HIS OWN LONG-TIME CONTACTS WITH VARIOUS OPPOSITION
ELEMENTS, AND SAID HE COULD EVEN TALK TO SERGIO RAMIREZ
OF THE GROUP OF TWELVE. PERHAPS THEY COULD ESTABLISH A
COMMISSION OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS REPRESENTING DEMO-
CRATIC ELEMENTS IN NICARAGUA TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF DIA-
LOGUE. SEVILLA-SACASA SAID HE STRONGLY OPPOSED THE TERM
"MEDIATION" AND STRESSED THAT THIS WAS AN INTERNAL PROB-
LEM; JURIDICALLY THE TERM MEDIATION WOULD NOT BE ACCEPT-
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ABLE AND NATIONAL DIGNITY WOULD NOT ACCEPT IT. EVERYONE
AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT WHAT WOULD HAVE TO HAPPEN IN EFFECT
WAS MEDIATION, ALTHOUGH ONE WOULD HAVE TO CALL IT SOME-
THING ELSE. QUINTANA ADDED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT
SOMOZA BE INCLUDED IN ANY NEGOTIATION SINCE HE HELD THE
POWER. HE ADDED WHAT HE SAID WAS VERY SENSITIVE: THE
OPPOSITION HAS NEVER BEEN IN A BETTER POSITION TO OBTAIN
CONCESSIONS FROM THE GON.

6. VAKY SAID HE WANTED TO STRESS THAT AS SEVILLA-SACASA
OPPOSED THE TERM MEDIATION, HE DID NOT LIKE THE TERM
"DIALOGUE," BECAUSE HE WAS NOT TALKING ABOUT DISCUSSION
THAT AVOIDED DECISIONS. QUINTANA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD;
WHAT WAS BEING TALKED ABOUT WAS A "NEGOTIATION." VAKY
REPEATED THAT SUCH A NEGOTIATION OR MEDIATION WOULD BE
VERY DIFFICULT, BECAUSE THE SIDES WERE FAR APART. AS
QUINTANA HAD HIMSELF ADMITTED, THE OPPOSITION FEARED AND
LACKED CONFIDENCE IN SOMOZA. WHAT WOULD BE REQUIRED
THEREFORE WERE MAJOR DECISIONS AND CONCESSIONS; WHAT WAS
BEING SOUGHT WAS AGREEMENT AND NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON THE
POLITICAL FUTURE BETWEEN NOW AND 1981. ALL SIDES HAD TO
AGREE IF TENSION WAS TO SUBSIDE AND PEACE BE RESTORED.

7. QUINTANA SAID THAT AN OUTSIDE "MEDIATOR" WOULD BE
DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT; WE SHOULD LET THE NICARAGUANS TRY
IT FIRST THEMSELVES WITH SOME DISTINGUISHED PERSON SUCH
AS A "MONSIGNOR" OR CIVIC LEADER. (QUINTANA MENTIONED
THE NAME OF ERNESTO FERNANDO HOLMAN.) VAKY SAID THEY
SHOULD APPROACH THIS WITH IMAGINATION, AND OUTSIDE MEDIA-
TORS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SUCH AS THE CENTRAL AMERICAN
PRESIDENTS. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO NEGOTIATE A NEW
CONSENSUS SO THAT CHAOS WOULD NOT DEVELOP.

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8. QUINTANA ASKED IF SUCH A NEGOTIATION PROCESS WOULD BE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE OAS CONSULTATION. VAKY SAID IT MIGHT BE. QUINTANA ASKED IF THE SEPTEMBER 12 SCHEDULED VOTE COULD BE POSTPONED. VAKY OPINED THAT IF SEVERAL NATIONS ASKED THAT IT BE POSTPONED IT COULD BE; IT COULD NOT BE CANCELED (SUBSEQUENTLY VAKY MADE CLEAR TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT IN A VOTE WE WOULD SUPPORT THE VENEZUELAN INITIATIVE). IT MIGHT BE POSTPONED A WEEK. QUINTANA SAID THAT WOULD ALLOW TIME FOR OTHER INITIATIVES.

9. QUINTANA EXPRESSED HIS INTEREST IN A VISIT BY THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND ASKED WHETHER SUCH A VISIT WOULD IMPACT ON THE CONVOCAION OF AN MFM. VAKY SAID IT MIGHT, AND THAT SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE. HE URGED QUINTANA TO CALL THE IAHRRC CHAIRMAN AND ASK FOR THE VISIT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE EMPHASIZED HOWEVER THAT THIS WAS A PARALLEL TRACK, AND THAT IT COULD NOT DEAL WITH THE CENTRAL POLITICAL PROBLEM OF INTERNAL PEACE AND THE POLITICAL FUTURE.

10. QUINTANA SAID HE PLANNED TO FLY BACK TONIGHT TO MANAGUA TO INFORM SOMOZA OF THIS CONVERSATION. VAKY REPEATED THAT "HEROIC" DECISIONS WERE NOW REQUIRED. SEVILLA-SACASA SAID THAT DIGNITY WAS ALSO NECESSARY. QUINTANA SAID HE HOPED TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON TUESDAY.

11. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE QUINTANA UNDERSTOOD THAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT MEDIATION, AND HE PERSISTENTLY USED THE WORD NEGOTIATION. SEVILLA-SACASA KEPT TALKING ABOUT DIALOGUE, AND WE REPEATEDLY STATED EACH TIME THAT WE WERE NOT TALKING ABOUT PALLIATIVES OR DISCUSSION TO AVOID DECISIONS. WE SPOKE OF THE NEED FOR A "CATALYTIC AGENT" AND SUGGESTED AN APPROPRIATE OUTSIDER. QUINTANA IN TURN STRESSED THE NEED FOR NICARAGUA'S PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED BY NICARAGUANS; THOUGH HE DID NOT DISCARD THE IDEA THAT
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TURNING TO AN OUTSIDE ELEMENT TO BRING HIS GOOD OFFICES TO BEAR MIGHT BE NEEDED IF INTERNAL PROCEDURES FAILED.

12. ACTION REQUESTED: IF ABOVE CONVERSATION IS DESCRIBED TO AMBASSADOR OR OTHERS AS A REPEAT CALL FOR "DIALOGUE," AMBASSADOR SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT WE TALKED OF MEDIATION (OR AS QUINTANA PREFERS "NEGOTIATION") AND OUR HOPE THAT

PARTIES WOULD BE PREPARED TO MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH INITIATIVES AS THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ONE. AMBASSADOR SHOULD ALSO STRESS AS APPROPRIATE, THAT ALL DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A PROCESS, AND THAT INCLUDING SOME ELEMENTS OF THE RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION AND NOT OTHERS WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING. THE SUGGESTION MIGHT ALSO BE REPEATED IF APPROPRIATE THAT A DISINTERESTED OUTSIDE ELEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO ALL MIGHT BE THE MOST EFFICACIOUS AND THE EASIEST IN THE LONG RUN.

CHRISTOPHER

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